MUTINY

A PAPER OF ANARCHISTIC IDEAS & ACTIONS

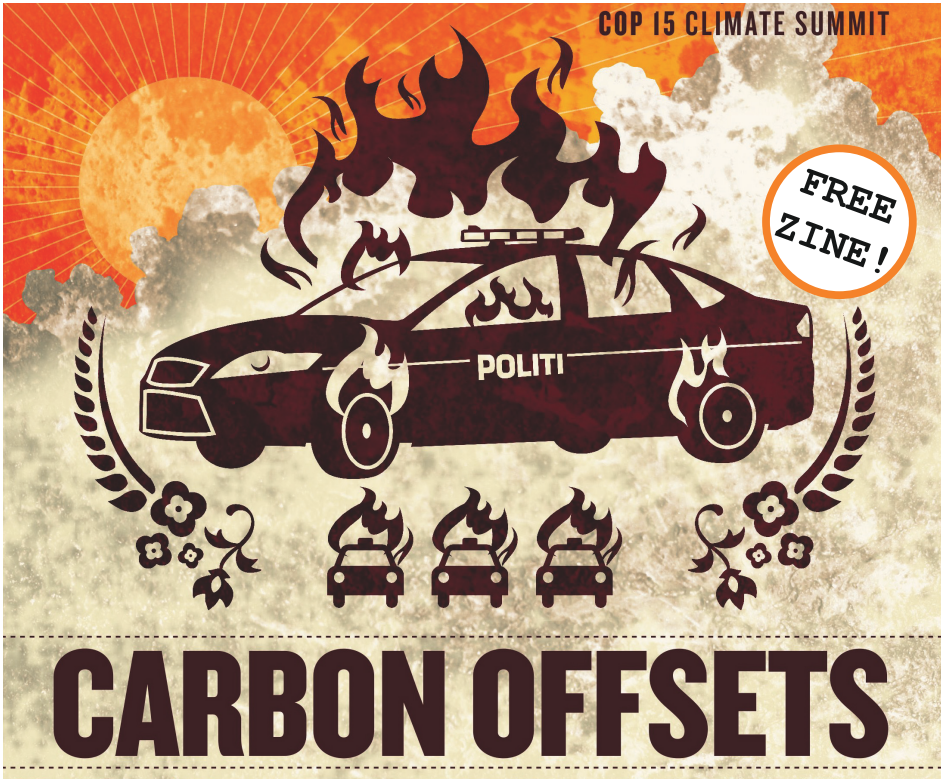
issue #45 - December 2009

The fake jump of the diver
december's revolt in Greece, eleven months on

Don't Trust a COP
a critique of the Copenhagen climate summit

Taking a stand against CO_2LONIALISM
analysis of forest offsetting and Australian carbon colonialism in Indonesia

plus news and reviews and more...



Mutiny is an anarchist collective based in Sydney. We started this zine to explore different avenues of disobediance & resistance, & to encourage people to write about their ideas, actions & experiences.

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Brief News

Tasmania

About 50 Aboriginal activists have been arrested and charged with trespass after trying to stop construction at a $164 million road bypass near Hobart. The four kilometre-long stretch at Brighton was an ancient crossroads for Tasmanian Aborigines pre-dating Egypt's Pyramids; “probably one of the most extensive, if not the most extensive find of Aboriginal heritage in the state," says Michael Mansell of the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre (TAC). Activists from the TAC want to put a stop to work on the bypass until a full audit of indigenous heritage is completed.
The Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources have a permit to clear the land, but the permit system, administered by Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania, does not represent or properly consult with the Tasmanian aboriginal community. Mansell says the group will stay as long as it takes to stop the bypass works. The TAC has banned all works involving aboriginal heritage in the state until issues over the bypass are resolved. Mr Mansell says anyone who ignores the ban will be blacklisted from future co-operative projects.

Melbourne

Protesters broke through police lines at the Park Hyatt hotel in Melbourne on 6th December, where Israeli Deputy Prime Minister, Silvan Shalom, was being feted by Julia Gillard as part of the Australia-Israel Leadership Forum. More than 200 protesters blockaded the hotel’s main entrance chanting “Free Palestine”. A few of the protesters broke through the police lines before being tackled by police in the foyer. Water and dirt were thrown at police, and protesters were sprayed with capsicum spray, before being forced back by police horses. The Israeli Deputy PM has been met with protest throughout his visit to Australia – in protest of Israel’s ongoing occupation of the West Bank, and siege on Gaza.

Copenhagen: Updates From COP15

Danish Police Powers Increased for COP15 Protests

COP15 police will be able to detain for 12 hours anyone suspected of intending to break the law; and hold activists for up to 40 days if they are charged with hindering police, after the Danish parliament voted to increase police powers in the lead up to the COP15 protests.

The new legislation, dubbed the “turmoil and riot law”, will also increase the fines for activists who breach the peace; stick around after a demonstration has been dispersed; or engage in disorderly behaviour to 5000 krona (672 Euros).

The laws came into effect on 7th December, just in time for the start of the COP15 conference.

BREAKING NEWS: Hundreds were arrested by Danish police at a 100,000 strong demonstration in Copenhagen on December 12. Protestors were ‘kettled’ in by cops after some threw cobblestones during the action.

Gas Station Burnt Down in Sweden

As part of the on-going demonstrations around the COP15 summit, on the night of 10th December revolutionaries in Sweden burnt down a Shell gas station in the city of Lund, just across the bridge from Copenhagen. The group released a communique the following day:

This is an act directed against the political

spectacle of COP15 – We are not going to let the charades of the political elite distract us from what we know needs doing.

...Unlike the elite gathering in Copenhagen, we consider the destruction of life a serious matter.

While they twist themselves around trying to seem concerned, they are fanning the flames of the fires that have been consuming all life it

The fires we build – and ignite – are those intended to rid ourselves of our shackles and create the space to build the worlds we dream of.

We see no other solution to the situation that industrial capitalism has put us in, than burning down gas-stations and all other monuments holding up this system. We are living in a socio-ecological crisis, and it will remain until we remove it's cause.

Social war – not socio-ecological crisis

Tangentyere

Tangentyere town camp residents decided not to proceed with an appeal against the Federal Court's decision last week to uphold the validity of the Federal Government's 40-year leases over the town camps. The Court's ruling took effect at 10.30am on 3rd December.

The leases enable the Federal Government to take control of Aboriginal land for 40 years, during which time residents will be substantially alienated from participating in decision making about what happens in the town camps.

In May this year, Minister Macklin threatened the town camps with compulsory acquisition if they did not agree to the 40-year leases. Faced with the abhorrent prospect of compulsory acquisition, the Housing Associations signed the 40-year leases, but not without highlighting that they were being signed under duress.

In essence, the Federal Court's ruling was that entering into the 40-year leases was in the best interests of the town camp residents, because the only other option open to them was compulsory acquisition of their land by the Federal Government.

The Court's decision has brought home to Alice Springs town camp residents the reality of the harshness of the Northern Territory Intervention and the extraordinary powers granted to the Minister.

Canberra

Over 200 people blockaded the primary entrance and exit of Parliament House in Canberra for several hours on Monday November 23rd.

The blockade took place during a Senate debate on the (now defeated) Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme (CPRS), which proposed to hand tens of billions of dollars to large corporate polluters; and set up a market trading in 'rights to pollute' the atmosphere. The action called for a commitment to at least 40% emissions reductions by 2020, and accused Prime Minister Kevin Rudd of not doing enough to secure a strong climate treaty at Copenhagen. The protest opposed the use of 'offsets' – particularly in forests. 'Offsets' enable ongoing and increasing carbon pollution by rich nations, by imposing dodgy 'emissions reduction projects' on majority world peoples.

The action was organised without phones or emails; and through an emerging grassroots community action network that has - until recently - been largely limited to letter-writing and 'awareness-raising' about the science of

climate change.

Police eventually broke-up the blockade, arresting over 130 demonstrators, who were all later released without charge.

West Bank, Palestine

The Israeli military carried out a swathe of political arrests in the second week of December, with a raid on the city of Nablus, as well as the village of Bil'in. 6 grassroots organisers were arrested in the lead up to the imminent Israeli-Hamas prisoner swap, which will see the return of captured Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit.

5 of the arrested were from Nablus and surrounding villages, where Israeli soldiers stormed their houses at 1am on Tuesday 9th December, taking them from their beds at gunpoint. Another was from the village of Bil'in, which has become famous for its ongoing resistance to the construction of the apartheid wall through the village.

These arrests are the latest in a series of political arrests throughout the later part of 2009, which has seen constant raids and political arrests in Bil'in; as well as the ongoing incarceration of Stop the Wall activist Mohammad Othman. Whilst numbers of prisoners involved in the prisoner-swap are as yet unconfirmed, Israeli authorities have historically countered any large-scale prisoner release with increases in arrests throughout the West Bank, maintaining a constant Palestinian prisoner population of approximately 11,000.

The trial for the Nablus activists is set for 16th December. Demonstrations against the arrests are planned throughout the West Bank.
More information can be found at www.palsolidarity.org

Summary of recent events in Greece:

Saturday, December 5

Cops storm Exarcheia square. Riot cops assemble literally a few meters away from the site of Alexis' assassination

Riot police stormed anarchist space Resalto in Western Athens

The Keratsini Town Hall in Athens (occupied in response to the earlier police raid of "Resalto") is raided

Sunday, December 6

21 anarchist are charged under the anti-terrorist law!

demonstration of around 15,000 people met by around 10,000 cops

5.20pm Riot police swept through Exarchia square. Around 100 tried to find refuge in a building while cops outside tear-gas through windows and doors

6.31pm Riot cops violated the academic asylum at the Athens Law School

7.10pm At least 134 detentions in Athens and 88 in Thessaloniki today

7.31pm At least three people were run over on purpose by motorcycle police at today's demonstration. One woman is in critical condition

9pm About 1000 people gathered in the place where Alexis was killed by the cops, marching on to Exarchia Square

Monday, December 7

5.55pm The administration building of the Aristotle University in Thessaloniki has been occupied by students

From Saturday until Monday at least 823 people have been detained across the country

One high school student is seriously injured by the cops, mass media confirms this, no further details so far

Wednesday, December 9

Anti-repression demos held in Athens, Thessaloniki, Trikala, Chania, Rethymno and Giannena

In many universities the students have occupied buildings

The Law School's administration has decided to force-evict the student radio has banned the use of its facilities for any "non-academic" purposes

One person was set free today. He was charged for having a bag of molotov cocktails but a video showed that he had no bag at all. The cops admitted that they had given him the bag. This is one of many fabricated charges

Friday, December 11

The total amount of bail money for those arrested during the "Resalto" raid is 51,000 euros. A solidarity fund has been established for the financial support of the arrested, but also for the prompt payment of their bail money.

Contact via e-mail: attameio22@espiv.net
Solidarity is our weapon

The fake jump of the diver

(December's revolt in Greece, eleven months on)

The following article was written by members of the Occupied London collective for Svartur Svanur, Iceland's first anarchist magazine. This is far from an "objective" take on the situation in the country; it is a shamelessly biased one politically, and this time we have opted for a slightly personal take, too. Comments, feedback etc are as always very welcome at editorial@occupiedlondon.org.

How fast does time run? A bit of a silly question, one might think. Surely time always runs at a steady pace – the ticking of a wall clock testifies to this, at every single second. The passage of days, weeks and months; pages flying one after the other off a wall-calendar… The pace of time for ever remains the same. But bring to your mind the following image for a moment: think not of one, but of many wall clocks in the same room. Each of these clocks' fingers moves either in their usual or the opposite direction, yet they are all moving in an accelerating, frantic speed. None of them abides to what was the previously normal time – something has happened in that room, a spark, that has made the clocks go crazy. The assassination of 16-year old Alexis Grigoropoulos in Athens last December was a spark like this. How much time has elapsed since his assassination? If we were to trust our calendars it has been just over ten months. If we were to look at the changes in the country though – and these are happening in all sorts of directions – it has definitely been much, much longer.

Since Alexis' assassination and already from the night of December 6th Greece has been seeing an outstanding political polarization – the unabridged gap between the two traditionally opposed political poles (probably conservative/radical would describe it better than left/right) must now be at its widest since the Civil War of the 1940s. Those standing between now have to make a choice – and certainly it is not a surprise that most of the mild centre-politics scene of jokers, such as the social-democrats of PASOK that have found themselves in government since October 4th, jumped right into the security of the conservative pole.

The radical political pole in the country came out stronger than even before, already from the very first nights of December. This not simply in terms of its street-fighting power on the barricades set around the capital and other cities across the country but mostly, in political terms after the revolt. Eleven months on, there are obvious signs all around the country: an enormous growth of grassroots neighbourhood-based popular assemblies; guerrilla gardening reclaiming the grey Greek urban spaces; squatting of new buildings in central Athens and beyond, and a broader popular solidarity to all these activities. During the summer, the last prisoner of December's revolt went on hunger strike and won his release, at least temporarily. Moreover, on a separate front, Greece saw existing urban guerrilla groups intensifying their activity and new ones springing up.

Reaction in the form of repression came soon. The long arm of Greek state and political elites came into the fore: fascists and neo-Nazis would organize those demos and counter strikes that the official state could not formally arrange. Of course one must bear in mind that a large number of cops are also neo-Nazis, proudly carrying both titles; and so, joint operations of official and unofficial state violence are not rare either. The Conservative government of Nea Dimokratia, in power until early October, certainly lost territorial control over parts of the country's major cities for several days during December 2008 and also had an impressive, by any standards, record of corruption – and so after December it became clear that was counting its last days in power. In a desperate final attempt to cling on this power and mobilise the more right-wing of its voters, a new collective enemy was founded: the migrants. And so, state anti-migration controls were tightened further – even if they already were among the strictest in Europe. Police forces, frequently with the manual contribution of full-time Nazis attacked the slums and squatted buildings where migrants without papers would be living: the migrant shanty town in the city of Patras was demolished and set on fire; the old courthouse building in Athens providing refuge for hundreds of migrants was promptly evicted.

Nevertheless, December had been decisive for Greek political consciousness: nine months after December's revolt, the rambling Conservative government of Kostas Karamanlis had to call snap elections elections and, even if the official political discourse and mass media had agreed in an omerta regarding December's revolt, it was obvious that most political damage to the government was caused since December.

After the snap-elections of October 4th the social-democrat party of PASOK found its easy way back into government. But Greeks have short memory it seems, as they should have been very familiar with PASOK and its manners: Go a few clock ticks back, to 2004, and PASOK was once again in power – at a time when seven demonstrators were framed up and arrested during the anti-EU Summit demonstrations in Thessaloniki in 2003; PASOK was in power to lead them to near-death while on a hunger-strike demanding their freedom; it was in power when people accused of participating in the urban guerrilla group "17th November" were tortured in hospital and in the white cells of the proud Greek Democracy. It was during PASOK's reign that the most impoverished member-state of the EU was awarded with the Nazi-inspired fiesta calling itself the Olympic Games and the construction firms would have a feast over public money in order to construct the Games' infrastructure. It was when PASOK was in charge that the dogma of security in favour of rights and personal freedoms was applied. It was during PASOK's time, this time in 1995, that police would raid university premises for the first time since the Colonel's Dictatorship (1967-1974), arresting and charging over 500 youths – most of them anarchists.

And so, a lot of people cannot forget neither forgive the social-democrats of PASOK for a lot of things – however there is a key event that reminds us very vividly that the socialist PASOK and the Conservative Nea Dimokratia have the same stink: It was during PASOK's reign in 1985 that a cop called Melistas shot dead another 15-year old boy, Michalis Kaltezas, during a demonstration in the Exarcheia neighbourhood of Athens, only a few streets away from where Alexis was shot in December 2008…

….PASOK was in power when Exarcheia saw for the first time the permanent deployment of riot police force in its periphery. Since then a lot has changed in the area – not least, this was the very place where Alexis was assassinated by the cops. It quickly became obvious that

this time round simply having police in the periphery of Exarcheia would not do the trick. And so only days after taking control, the head of PASOK's new "ministry of citizen protection" (an Orwellian twist for a ministry in charge of the police force – its previous, most truthful naming was "ministry of Public Order") decided to launch a full-scale occupation of Exarcheia. As of October 7th, 2008 permanent police force has been stationed literally across the entire historical neighbourhood, making hundreds of searches and arrests in an obvious attempt to intimidate people politically or otherwise active in the area: To try and make Exarcheia a neighbourhood "just like anywhere else".

What is perhaps the most striking feature of this new-old government in Greece is what seems to be a conscious effort on its part to portray a completely different image of what it is supposedly doing from what it is actually doing. The "ministry of citizen protection" ordered the indiscriminate arrests of hundreds of citizens whose only "crime" was to be in Exarcheia. And so, the confident promises of the new minister to "immediately deal with" any cops abusing their power was quickly covered by the dry sound of police batons "immediately" landing on peoples' heads. For all the lies to which we are used to by professional politicians, what is happening is still quite phenomenal: PASOK managed to get itself elected on a promise of launching a somehow more fair, more "humane" mode of governance – perhaps not completely unlikely the government elected in Iceland after the crisis and the rise of the radical politics that came along with it. It is as if the what happens on the ground is completely blanked out and even inverted when it comes to its spectacle image, its media image. And this is how things remaining the same, or even the onslaught of state power is cunningly turned by the media machine into an image of "progress", "development", "social responsibility". Imagine: a TV screen is showing a diver ready to jump forward, toward the water. At the exact moment when the diver sets off their jumping board, the screen goes blank. All that the audience is left with is the blank screen and a firm belief that the diver is now making his way into the water. Off screen, the driver lands back onto the diving board. He turns around and walks off.

The TV screen, of course, never switches off entirely – it is just that it chooses wisely what images to broadcast when. In the best case, mainstream media have chosen to keep quiet about what has been happening on the ground since December. In most cases though, they have chosen to line up with the police and to back their repressive operations; with parliamentary politicians of all colours condemning December's revolt as a blind outpouring of violence; with the new government, passing its smokescreen promises of social change for concrete reality.

Regardless of the media screen, of course, social rage in the country continues to mount up rapidly. The police continue to kill: in December it was Alexis, in July it was Arivan Abdullah Osman, in October it was Mohammad Atif Kamran and so many countless and often nameless others. Workers, young and old, continue to be exploited in the truncheons of the neo-liberal free market of temp work agencies, part-employment and zero labour rights.

Back to the TV screen: the lens now focuses on the water, which seems still. At the shores divers-to-be are gathering up, shoving each other to get as close to the water as they can. The water in the screen is still and yet the question only seems to be when it will be shaken again.

Don't trust a COP to deliver climate action

by JD

Currently representatives from countries around the world are meeting in Copenhagen, Denmark to draft a treaty to replace the Kyoto Protocol. Some commentators and NGOs describe this summit as the "most important meeting ever" or "our last chance to save the planet." If that's true the planet is in serious trouble – because all previous Conference of the Parties (COPs) have produced nothing but business as usual. It has been clear for a long time that governments and corporations lack the desire to take the necessary steps to address climate change – genuine solutions to mitigate climate change are nowhere near the table at Copenhagen. What is on the table at Copenhagen is a deal to protect the interests of global capital and the creation of new private property rights. The neo-liberal market "solutions" being pushed at Copenhagen cannot and will not solve the climate crisis, and are in many cases environmentally and socially harmful. For these reasons many groups in the grassroots movements for climate justice have adopted an antagonistic stance towards the summit.

Actions planned during the summit include;

- KlimaForum – a people's climate summit (www.klimaforum09.org)
- A day of direct action against corporations taking part in the COP process – Don't Buy the Lie (11 Dec - http://notyourbusiness.hacklab.dk)
- Broad based march for climate justice (12 Dec) which includes an anti-capitalist bloc (http://12dec09.dk) and a global day of action (http://www.globalclimatecampaign.org)
- Blockade of Copenhagen's harbor (13 Dec) "Hit the production!" aiming to shut down a site of capitalist industrial production (http://htp.noblogs.org)
- Day of action by international no border groups (14 Dec - http://info.interactivist.net/node/13135)
- Mass non-violent civil disobedience action to enter the COP 15 conference and hold a People's Summit for Climate Justice (RECLAIM POWER! - Pushing for Climate Justice! - 16 Dec) (http://www.climate-justice-action.org/)
- Actions throughout the city to mark the last day of the summit (18 Dec - http://www.nevertrustacop.org/)

This is just a snapshot – there are also protests focusing on reparations for climate debt, farmer's actions against the agro-industry organized by Via Campesina, and agricultural action day. For a more detailed list see: http://www.climateimc.org/en/original-news/2009/11/09/list-cop15-copenhagen-protests-and-events

What is and isn't on the table at Copenhagen

The basic proposals on the table at Copenhagen ignore climate science, and are undemocratic and inequitable. The proposals for greenhouse gas emission reductions the industrialised countries are bringing to

Copenhagen don't come close to what the science tells us is urgently needed. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change advise that we need to get below 350 greenhouse gas particles per million, other scientists advise stablising around 280ppm, yet the Australian government's proposal is about stabilising at 450ppm. The proposal Australia has tabled at Copenhagen, to not have binding emissions reductions targets, but to have each country maintain a national schedule with their 'nationally appropriate mitigation commitments'. Such proposals are another attempt by the over-developed world to avoid our immediate responsibility to make the drastic emission reductions the science tells us are necessary.

It is clear that Copenhagen is not a democratic negotiating space – business and corporate lobbyists have monopolized conference space and have spent millions influencing climate policy internationally. In 2007 US companies alone spent US$90 million to influence climate policy. At the COP in Poznan (2008) 1500 industry lobbyists were present either as NGOs or as members of government delegations, and at the Bali COP (2007) the International Emissions Trading Association (IETA) had approximately 300 delegates and excellent access to government and thus was able to exert a powerful influence over the negotiations.

Moreover, over-developed nations are trying to undermine the principle of "common but differentiated responsibility" which recognises that it is the industrialized world that is responsible for the majority of historical emissions and inequitable per capita emissions, and thus must take the lead. The failure to acknowledge this has caused massive rifts in the negotiations, and one of the reasons we are looking at 'failure' at Copenhagen is because Global North countries are failing to take responsiblity for their historical emissions and current levels of per capital emissions.

At the heart of the Kyoto Protocol is emissions trading, and emissions trading will be at the heart of any post-Copenhagen agreement. This turns the atmosphere into a privately owned commodity with a market value which can be bought and sold for profit. The dismal failure of the EU emissions trading scheme shows that such methods do not work to cut carbon emissions but do make large profits for corporations. The carbon market is currently worth about $126-billion and some estimate that it may grow to $1.9 trillion by 2020. A recent report by Friends of the Earth International demonstrates that carbon trading has not and cannot cut back carbon emissions.

The most contentious part of carbon trading is the capacity to generate 'offsets'. It is anticipated that Copenhagen discussions will focus on expanding the options for the Global North to 'offset' their emissions, and thus maintain business as usual.

The Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) allows over-developed countries' corporations to put money towards industrial projects in less 'developed' countries and allow this to offset their continued carbon pollution. A key problem is that about two-thirds of CDM projects do not represent real emission cuts. Many CDM projects are being actively resisted by communities and social movements in the Global South because they have negative social and environmental effects. The CDM is massive business: Carbon Emission Reductions transactions in 2007 totaled $18 billion, more than triple the previous year's figure. It is anticipated that project developers will sell around $36 billion worth of CDM credits over the next five years. By April 2008 1000 CDM projects had been registered. Now there are 4000 in the pipeline. The most common type of CDM project is hydropower, consisting of more than a quarter of all projects. Bio-mass is the second most common, followed by wind power. Only 16 CDM projects, or 0.5% of total

approved projects to date have been solar projects. Together India and China have received around 68 percent of all carbon credits issued through the CDM, worth $4.6 billion at current prices, and used them to build 70 new dams, more than 100 wind projects and more than $3 billion worth of hydrofluorocarbon-23 (HFC-23) projects—a byproduct in the manufacturing process of HCFC-22, which is a gas used as a refrigerant. Energy efficiency measures make up only 5% of all projects. It is also dubious whether many CDM projects represent "additional" saving, partially because of methodological problems such as difficulty in establishing the baselines, and the scientific complexity involved in monitoring and verification, and because companies tasked with "validating" CDM's have previously rubberstamped obviously disastrous projects. Australia is currently pushing for clean coal to be a CDM project, which was endorsed earlier this year by a statement from 21 Asian and Middle Eastern energy ministers.

The Jepirachi Wind Power Farm, Colombia was registered as CDM project 0194. The environmental benefits of it are questionable at best, as much of the energy generated from the wind farm is for the world's largest open-pit coal mine, El Cerrejón. This is a huge source of CO2 emissions and has a terrible record of human rights abuses including forced displacement. The wind farm has also created massive problems for the Wayuu people. Since 1993, more than 200 Wayúu have been assassinated to clear their land for 8 mega-projects including this one, and Wayúu leaders continue to receive death threats. To compound it all, the local community where the wind farm is located, in October 2008, still did not have electricity. For more case studies on CDM projects see: Indigenous People's Guide – False Solutions to Climate Change. (This can be found at: http://www.earthpeoples.org/CLIMATE_CHANGE/Indigenous_Peoples_Guide-E.pdf)

Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries (REDD) proposes to allow over-developed countries' corporations to offset their carbon emissions by paying less 'developed' countries to protect forests. Firstly, this is not a feasible solution because whilst forests are carbon sinks they do not hold carbon forever, the only place carbon is stored forever is below the ground; fires or forest degradation (predicted at 2 degrees tipping point where forests become net emitters of carbon) as well as natural cycles of growth and decay release the carbon back into the atmosphere. Further, a REDD agreement could threaten the livelihoods of the 1.6 billion people who are partially reliant on forests for subsistence survival and lead to increased privatisation on customary land and denial of Indigenous peoples' rights to land. Because REDD's definition of forests included mono-culture plantations, it may actually increase logging of native forests and also risks flooding the carbon market with cheap offset permits – thereby delaying real action on climate change.

Prepare for the greenwash – it seems likely that the only binding agreement to come out of Copenhagen will be a REDD deal – this would not be a win for either the climate or the forests.

The 'solutions' proposed at Copenhagen must be rejected, not only because they will not reduce emissions, but because they will significantly increase already massive global social divisions and have detrimental impacts on communities around the world and promote 'carbon colonialism'. The 'solutions' on the table at Copenhagen are ones which allow the industrialized world to maintain 'business as usual'. Emissions trading allows for the creation of a new form of highly lucrative intangible property and thus fuel capital's constant need for economic growth, even in the face of overwhelming evidence that there are clear ecological limits to such growth.
There is a building movement, particularly in the global south, calling for climate justice; for real solutions to climate change and a clear rejection of this market agenda. We can best support these calls by delegitimizing the Copenhagen process and neo-liberal market based solutions and by acting in solidarity with the struggles of the global climate justice movement.

Taking a stand against CO_2LONIALISM

Report from Friends of the Earth Sydney

The international climate change negotiations have begun in Copenhagen with a jam-packed agenda to wrangle rules for new carbon markets; and the Rudd Labor Government's proposed Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme was just defeated for a second time in the Senate, handing Rudd a 'trigger' for an early election on the issue. Carbon trading, it seems, will not die the quick death it deserves.

Along with a raft of problems, the proposed Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme would allow 100% of Australian emissions reductions to be found offshore. Federal Treasury predicts at least 50% reliance on offshore credits to achieve the lowest reduction in emissions (5% reduction).

In November, Friends of the Earth Australia and AidWatch released a joint report, 'What a Scam – Australia's REDD Offsets for Copenhagen', examining the Australian and Indonesian Governments' program to create carbon 'offsets' from reduced deforestation. It found the Australian Government is misusing aid money and its bilateral relationship to set up cheap forest offset schemes in Indonesia, and evade emissions reductions in Australia. The report was endorsed by Wahana Lingkungan Hidup Indonesia (WALHI - Friends of the Earth Indonesia) and Serikat Petani Indonesia (Indonesian Peasants Union – Via Campesina); two of many groups organising against carbon trading in Indonesia.

The Australian and Indonesian Governments have a joint program to create carbon offsets and submitted a proposal to Copenhagen climate change negotiators this year, arguing the UN should recognise cheap carbon credits from 'reduced deforestation' in Indonesia. Their proposal for further carbon trading in forests is based on what is said to be the 'first large scale' pilot of forest offsets, funded by the Australian Government in Kalimantan, Indonesia.

This forest offset scheme, called REDD (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation in Developing Countries), would produce credits so Australian companies can keep polluting, and help the Australian Government to meet international emissions reduction obligations.

James Goodman of AidWatch says, "The Australian government makes it quite clear the use of aid to promote REDD is entirely self-interested. It is predicted offsets for reduced deforestation will be much cheaper [than those currently available in UN offset schemes, and a bargain compared to 'permits to pollute' in emissions trading schemes]. This is a flagrant misuse of aid money for cut-price Australian offsets."

Teguh Surya of WALHI says, "The Indonesian government passed their REDD regulation in the face of UN concern that these laws fail to recognise indigenous rights. Unless indigenous rights are protected, millions of Indonesians are at risk of being excluded from the forest resources that provide them with a sustainable subsistence livelihood."

So, what are offsets?

Journalist Dan Welch says, "Offsets are an imaginary commodity, created by deducing what you hope happens from what you guess would have happened."

The basic premise of international carbon 'offsets' is simple: polluters in the North keep polluting, and pay someone else in the South to pollute less or 'sequester' carbon (by not cutting down a forest, for example). This is supposed to produce an overall reduction in carbon pollution. However, it is both fairer, and necessary for a safe climate, for polluters in the North to actually reduce emissions, over and above reductions in the South.

Offsetting delays the phase out of polluting industries in the North and South, often involves privatisation and jeopardising land rights, and does not necessarily reduce pollution – in fact, it will probably mean increases in total pollution around the world.

How do offsets fit into carbon markets?

Carbon trading schemes rely on the market to produce a high carbon price, which will then 'encourage polluters to pollute less'. In most schemes, 'permits to pollute' are given away to the biggest polluters, and a 'cap' in emissions is set, to be lowered over time. But the 'cap' has a big hole in it – markets can be flooded with 'offsets' from outside the scheme.

The Rudd Government's Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme (CPRS) will allow polluters to buy unlimited amounts of permits from overseas. This will mean emissions in Australia can continue to rise, as schemes with questionable impacts on communities (and questionable emissions reductions) endlessly multiply to 'offset' them overseas.

What exactly is REDD?

REDD is one of too many acronyms in the international climate negotiations and trading markets. 'Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries' (REDD) is a UN program put forward as a way to reduce global emissions, protect forests and transfer money from North to South. The program involves turning forests into commodities that can be sold to polluters as offsets.

Polluters who buy credits from REDD projects pay governments and/or companies to lock up forests and prevent them from being cut or burned. REDD is based on the expectation of deforestation, and the speculative possibilities are huge: rather than planting trees, REDD would prevent them from being felled. But forests are difficult to measure in terms of carbon, as they are full of diverse organisms and complex ecosystems – they are not like factories that pump $C0_2$ out of a chimney you can put a meter on. Worse, REDD perversely creates an incentive to deforest: governments must plan to log their forests in order to be able to claim a credit for prevented deforestation.

REDD has major implications for communities who live with forests – by definition, the projects involve privatising and/or restricting access to land. Communities are likely to have their livelihoods and land rights disrupted or destroyed. Projects involve surveillance of communities for accounting purposes, and sometimes punitive measures to 'discourage' deforestation. Some governments (including the Australian government) have opposed the inclusion of provisions for indigenous and local community rights. Many indigenous groups have drawn attention to REDD's potentially ominous repercussions for land rights and indigenous sovereignty.

The Australian Government's Kalimantan Forests and Climate Partnership

The Australian Government's International Forest Carbon Initiative has been funding REDD pilots in Indonesia and PNG since 2007, with $200 million from the aid budget. The Australian Government explicitly states the primary purpose for these pilots is to influence the negotiating agenda for the next international climate agreement – not 'humanitarian aid'.

One of the Australian Government's key interventions into REDD is the Kalimantan Forests and Climate Partnership (KFPC), a REDD pilot project aiming to reforest and reflood approximately 100,000 hectares of degraded peatland swamp forest in Central Kalimantan in Indonesia. The site is a small section of the former Mega Rice Project, a failed attempt by President Suharto to regain rice self-sufficiency for Indonesia, which involved the clearing of over one million hectares of peat forest and forcibly displacing over 80,000 people.

While the project of rehabilitating the peat swamp is important, both environmentally and socially, there are a number of problems with

KFCP. Firstly, it exists to create leverage at the international climate negotiations, and garner cheap offsets for business-as-usual for corporate pollution and profit in Australia. Secondly, KFCP documents make no mention of rights of affected indigenous or forest-dependent communities. Thirdly, the project focuses on small-scale subsistence practices, rather than the agricultural industries such as palm oil plantations that are driving large-scale deforestation in the region (targeting small farmers and peasants; not industrial logging).

What are Indonesians saying about REDD and this project?

ARPAG, the People's Peat Management Alliance, is a local grassroots group based in Central Kalimantan. The group is a "collective of peasant groups, fisherfolks, rattan handcrafters and rubber collectors". ARPAG's aim is "to reclaim our rights to protect peatland ecology and our livelihood", and are calling on the United Nations climate conference to reject proposals that undermine their rights to resources and their struggles. The group is strongly opposed to offsetting as it "keep[s] the practice of 'business as usual' and, even worse, sustain[s] dirty and destructive industries." ARPAG has over 7000 members in 52 villages, who, prior to being displaced by Suharto's Mega Rice Project, were living sustainably within the peatland ecosystem.

An open letter to the United Nations climate change meeting Bangkok in September 2009 says, "ARPAG reject all form of foreign aid to save peatland that generate from carbon trading or foreign loans under the scheme of REDD or any other scheme. The "aid" will only bring severe impact to people and peatland resources and will undermine people's sovereignty over resources."

ARPAG also opposes the power given to corporate interests in REDD schemes, saying, "These interests 'will control, patronise, and undermine the role of government to protect its people and peatland resources." In this context, ARPAG says REDD becomes "conservation colonialism."

Opposing carbon co_2lonialism: climate justice now!

The opposition of forest peoples in Indonesia is echoed by affected and indigenous peoples across the world; some of whom are taking action against REDD and carbon trading at the Copenhagen international climate negotiations. Tom Goldtooth of the Indigenous Environmental Network says, "The World Bank, northern countries and big international NGOs, under the eyes of the United Nations, are creating carbon cowboys that trample over the rights of indigenous peoples, our land and our forests. The trees of the global south are not a commodity to be openly traded on a global carbon market."

The indigenous caucus at the 2008 UN climate negotiations also condemned REDD, stating, "We, the Indigenous Peoples have suffered the worst impacts of climate change without having contributed to its creation. We must not be placed in the position of suffering from mitigation strategies which we believe have offered false solutions to the problem at hand. And even worse, many of the mitigation and adaptation schemes being discussed in UNFCCC and related processes threaten our rights and our very existence."

Indigenous, affected and Southern peoples - alongside Northern climate justice activists - are taking action against carbon trading and unjust REDD forest offsets throughout the international climate negotiations in Copenhagen.

The 'What A Scam: Australia's offsets for Copenhagen' report, alongside actions (with more in mid-December!) is part of a new campaign of the Friends of the Earth Sydney Collective opposing carbon trading and unjust 'offsets'; working with affected and indigenous peoples against carbon co_2lonialism; and pushing for climate justice.

You can download the full report from www.sydney.foe.org.au and contact us at: foesydney@gmail.com

Reviews

Book - The Coming Insurrection by The Invisible Committee

For me, The Coming Insurrection seemed like the ultra-left version of Masterchef-you don't read it because it's necessarily going to be good but because everyone else is reading and talking about it. Written in the wake of the 2005 French riots in the banlieues, it won fame primarily through the arrest and prosecution of the 'Tarnac 9' -one of them is accused of being the author.

I started reading it from a fairly strong position of skepticism towards 'insurrectionary anarchism' -associated with authors like Alfredo Bonano. While they are comrades, a lot of it has seemed theoretically narrow. There's fiery rhetoric about 'not waiting for the right conditions', yet when the main form of activity proposed is extreme militancy it actually seems like the most profound form of waiting. After brilliantly critiquing the individualised nature of 'freedom' under capitalism, the Invisible Committee concludes that this is summed up by Reebok's massive slogan in Shanghai -I am what I am. I thought their philosophy was better summed up by Nike's 'Just Do It'-forget any kind of theory, we just have to cast off the recuperators and attack!

Yet overall I was pleasantly surprised. It's written beautifully, with daring and adventure. It's resonated with parts of the recent Californian student occupation movement (www.wewanteverything.wordpress.com). One Californian radical cleverly inverts the normal derision for 'adventurism' on the left. What is needed instead is a constant spirit of adventure -rather than replicating the misery and alienation of work or school-as who would want to join a movement otherwise. Likely the Invisible Committee would agree.

The authors propose the spread of Communes; combining everyday life, politics and work. This is a break from the organizations and tactics of the traditional, reformist left; of which they are utterly scathing. Activists offer "nothing but the story of their many defeats and bitterness that they have produced". While at times it seems too harsh; it's easy to have a substantial critique of the 'demand and march' model of activism. Communes range from wildcat strikes to liberated slave communities-the main commonality is that people "find each other" and experience joy.

In 2000 Empire was described as being 'the Communist Manifesto for the internet age'. In many ways the Coming Insurrection is a much more apt comparision: explicitly written as propaganda, aiming to spell out a series of truths rather than being a detailed analysis. Hopefully the Coming Insurrection can generate a fraction of the debate about revolution that this classic did-after all, maybe we have nothing to lose but the chains of the reformist Left!

Punk gig - Leftover Crack @ the Bald Faced Stag

I will begin this review by saying that I was not especially a fan of these guys before the gig (didn't know 'em). One of the support bands, the Rum Jacks were totally frikken' awesome. Fun and filled with energy, with slow and fast folk punk songs with traditional Irish instruments.

Leftover Crack were somehow totally offensive and yet utterly boring from the start. And it just kept going until I left the room.

First there was some comment about everyone in the room having grandparents from England. This immediately excluded all other ethnicities from the crowd. That was followed by more than twenty minutes of Stza (the lead singer) whining about having to play songs for 'kids with rich parents', and how the heat on stage was so much worse than the heat in the mosh pit. A few songs later he began to kick people in the front row in the face and broke someone's nose. What a fucking jerk! A woman then confronted him to deal with his violent behaviour, and in the most cowardly and pathetic manner, Stza stood in front of his microphone and pretended not to hear her. This went on for a while, as he ignored her and refused to play until she left. To her credit she persisted which pissed off Stza even further. He then tried to (with some success) turn the crowd against her saying into the mic 'do you want to listen to her, or us play some songs?' The crowd was shit and chanted for her to get down. Eventually Stza said 'fine, sorry. Are we good now?' like the way three-year-old brats apologise when they don't really want to.

Basically, at least at this gig, Stza was a complaining coward and a violent jerk. And all this from someone claiming to be a left anarchist singing songs against oppression. Very problematic indeed.

In This Issue:

- An anticapitalist critique of the upcoming Copenhagen climate change conference of world governments
- An investigation of the Federal Government's proposed plans for a carbon pollution reduction scheme and how Rudd will use foreign aid as leverage in his dealings with Indonesia
- Emotions run high in Greece in an account of the last eleven months there since the murder of Alexis Grigoropoulos at the hands of the State
- Also, news from the ongoing riots in Athens since the one-year anniversary of Alexis' murder, new Danish police powers in anticipation of environmental protests, mass arrests in Palestine, anti-zionist protests in Melbourne, Indigenous struggle in Tasmania, and more…

Upcoming Events:

Black Rose Community Meeting:
Sunday 27th December 4pm

An open meeting to discuss the maintenance and growth of the library and bookshop. Come along and share your ideas for the space.

Jura Books amended opening hours

Jura will be closed from the 25th of December until the 6th of January, but they'll be open Tuesday to Sunday until then. Check out their great new stock including 2010 slingshot organisers and calenders.

REDRATNYE

Dance into 2010 as The Red Rattler Theatre celebrates her first New Year's Eve heaving with electro feminists and politically charged performance. Doors open 7pm $40.00+BF presale only. *redrattler.org*

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(100m from the station)

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